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UNCLAS GUATEMALA 000392

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: GUATEMALA: PKO UPDATE

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¶1. (U) Summary: The Guatemalan military continues its preparations for a March 2005 deployment of an Army Kaibil (Special Forces) company to the UN Peacekeeping Operations Mission in the Congo (MONUC). Plans to also deploy a Military Police company for MONUC duty are pending a final UN decision; the Guatemalan military reports that Denmark has offered \$500,000 to equip the military police mission. To support efforts to establish a regional peacekeeping operations training center in Guatemala, USMILGP Guatemala has requested \$1 million in Global Peacekeeping Operations Initiative (GPOI) funding over two years, and the Guatemalan Army is sending instructors from its PKO school on a U.S. Southcom-funded visit to peacekeeping schools in Argentina and Chile to study the facilities and infrastructure at these Southern Cone schools. A high-level GOG delegation will make a 13-18 February U.S. Southcom-funded visit to UN/DPKO and the MINUSTAH mission in Haiti, respectively, for an orientation on UN Peacekeeping Operations. End Summary.

¶2. (U) The Guatemalan military has a 15 March target date for deployment of a Kaibil company (100 troops) to MONUC, but this date is likely to slip as the unit is being equipped through commercial purchases, which raises funding issues and includes a requirement for USG export license approval for communications equipment. Guatemalan Army staff personnel report that Denmark has offered half a million dollars to equip a military police company for the MONUC deployment. The Guatemalans had originally told us that the military police company deployment had received final approval but we are now hearing that no decision has been reached by UN/DPKO.

Guatemala is apparently the only country that has so far volunteered to provide a contingent for this MONUC military police tasking.

¶3. (U) Guatemalan military ambitions for a regional peacekeeping training center include upgrade of its existing PKO school in Coban as well as creation of a new civil-military PKO training center in Guatemala City. The request for \$1 million from FY04 and FY05 GPOI funds would be divided between the Coban facility and the planned center in the capital. Three Guatemalan Army officers will make a 17-22 April visit to PKO training centers in Argentina and Chile to study the facilities and infrastructure and learn more about interaction with the UN on PKO issues.

¶4. (SBU) At Guatemalan military initiative, a 13-18 February U.S. Southcom-sponsored trip of Guatemalan military officers to UN/DPKO offices and Haiti has been upgraded to include the Vice Minister of Defense and one of the Vice Foreign Ministers, and civilian officials from the Finance Ministry and Presidential staff. The 13-15 February orientation by DPKO and subsequent visit to the Guatemalan contingent in Port Au Prince is intended to build civilian support for Guatemalan PKO participation. (The military has gained strong support from the Foreign Ministry but has had less success with the Finance Ministry.)

¶5. (SBU) Comment: The Guatemalan Armed Forces leadership has eagerly embraced PKO participation, viewing it as A) a new, politically legitimate mission that supports military modernization; B) a funding source through UN reimbursement; and, C) a medium for enhancing military professionalization through interchange with other military forces. We should encourage these efforts politically and support them logistically whenever possible, including through expeditious approval of export licenses for equipment to support Guatemalan PKO deployments.

HAMILTON